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Review: Dark Matter Halos, 'Permanent Midnight'

By Rob Burgess

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Released in 2010, *Permanent Midnight* represents the second full-length album for Indy's own Dark Matter Halos (Jeff Lee on drums, Sarah Cravens on bass, Susan Morris on violin, keyboards and vocals and Todd Cravens on guitar and vocals). The band, which was formed in 2005, also released their *You'll Never Walk Alone* EP earlier in the year.

As the band's rhythm section, Lee and Sarah Cravens lay down solid bedrock for the voices of Todd Cravens and Morris to twist above. On nearly every cut Todd Cravens' acid rock guitar solos lead the sound into uncharted territories, tethered only by the steadfast musicianship of the rest of the band. Meanwhile, Morris' exceptional musicianship (such as her violin solos on "Hear the Guns" and "Lights on the Skyway") acts as one of the main secret ingredients in Dark Matter Halos' special sauce.

As they'll be happy to tell you, Dark Matter Halos' sound has many fathers including (but not limited to) "the Birthday Party, Royal Trux, Morphine, Black Sabbath, Iggy and the Stooges, The Cure, Syd Barrett and PJ Harvey." Opening song "In a Forest" feels as if it's a long-lost outtake from The Who Sell Out. "Monkey on the Vine" borrows a groove from any number of early Pink Floyd tracks. The memory of late Morphine front man Mark Sandman is well served by the rollicking "Gypsy Hag".

The word "derivative" is generally applied as a pejorative, but it hardly seems like a fair description here. What makes Permanent Midnight work as a collection of songs is the boundless joy with which they are presented. Dark Matter Halos pull off this trick because of their obvious love of the music at hand. They're simply having too much fun to care.

—Rob Burgess